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INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC 0893
RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT PASS OPIC
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USTR FOR CHRIS DEANGELIS
COMMERCE FOR DEES, CHOPPIN, AND FONOVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [EINV](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Afghan Commerce Minister to Visit Washington (Oct. 4-9)

¶1. Please note action request in para 5.

¶2. (SBU) Commerce Minister Wahidullah Shahrani plans to travel to Washington October 4 through 9. He is looking to schedule meetings with top USG officials and members of Congress during his first two full days in Washington as well as around his participation in a private-sector conference on Central Asia (October 7), a Central Asian Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting (October 8), which he will attend as an observer, and the Afghan-U.S. TIFA meeting (October 9). The Minister returns to Kabul late October 9.

¶3. (SBU) Minister Shahrani told emboffs September 23 that he has requested a meeting with SRAP Holbrooke and Commerce Secretary Locke through the Afghan Embassy's Commercial Attaché. Shahrani is interested in talking with SRAP Holbrooke about the Afghanistan/Pakistan transit trade agreement and also about the next U.S/Afghanistan/Pakistan trilateral meeting. Minister Shahrani has also requested meetings with D/S Jacob Lew, whom he was not able to meet during the Deputy Secretary's visit earlier in September because of a ministerial meeting in Manila, to discuss the transit trade agreement.

¶4. (U) Minister Shahrani seeks meetings as well with USTR Ambassador Kirk and with OPIC Acting President Spinelli. With Mr. Spinelli he looks to discuss investment opportunities in Afghanistan. Shahrani noted he also plans to meet with World Bank officers in connection with the Bank's ongoing private sector development programs.

¶5. (U) In addition, Shahrani seeks meetings with members of Congress, particularly to discuss the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs). Shahrani said his Embassy is arranging congressional meetings, including with Congressman Howard Coble (R-NC) and Nita Lowey (D-NY), whom he has previously met. Shahrani, who is an articulate spokesman on Afghan trade and industry issues and who has been following closely the pending Reconstruction Opportunity Zone (ROZ) legislation, is interested in meeting with other members of Congress as well.

¶6. (SBU) Shahrani is reformist, pro-growth, and pro-market. Washington agencies will find him an articulate interlocutor on Afghanistan's current economic situation, on transit and other regional trade issues, and on the commercial opportunities in the country. Embassy recommends the appointments he seeks and would also encourage the Department work to arrange a broader spectrum of meetings with interested members of Congress.

EIKENBERRY